WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Open sky policy

†*86 PROF. R.B.S. VARMA:

SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have formulated open sky policy;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof;

(c) whether the aviation industry is likely to grow with the formulation of this policy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (d) International air services are governed through the mechanism of bilateral air services agreements signed between India and different countries. While Government has gradually liberalized the traffic entitlements under these agreements with various countries based on traffic demand, no 'Open Sky' policy has been adopted. Traffic rights have been substantially liberalized with USA, UK, China, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, France, ASEAN countries and Sri Lanka during last two years. Liberalization of traffic entitlements has resulted in enhanced operations between India and various countries.

Methane gas for industries

†*89. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the time expected to be taken to make available to industries methane gas received from Jharia & Raniganj blocks;

(b) whether Government is inviting foreign companies to exploit it commercially; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) 1 Coal Bed Methane (CBM) block in Jharia and 3

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

CBM blocks in Raniganj coal fields have been awarded by the Government for exploration and production of CBM. While commercial production of CBM in Jharia and Raniganj South is expected to commence in 2007-08, the CBM potential in the Raniganj North and Raniganj East blocks would be known after completion of the exploration and pilot assessment programme.

(b) and (c) The CBM policy formulated by the Government provides for international competitive bidding, allowing for both domestic and foreign companies to compete for blocks on a level playing field.

With respect to engaging foreign companies on a service contract basis or inducting them as partners, the companies signatory to the CBM contracts may do so in accordance with the provisions of the respective contracts.

LIC scam in Voluntary Policy, 1999

*91. SHRIRAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that CBI has unearthed a premium scandal in Delhi office of LIC involving misappropriation of funds in five years Voluntary Policy launched in 1999;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any responsibility has been fixed;

(d) if so, the action taken against the culprits; and

(e) the steps taken to streamline the procedures to check fraudulent working in LIC ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) LIC has -oported that they do not have any Five Years Voluntary Policy launched in 1999. There, however is a case under investigation by CBI regarding the Salary Saving Scheme (SSS) of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). LIC has informed that its Branch Office located in Khan Market, New Delhi services the SSS of MCD. As per this Scheme, MCD is required to deduct the premium due from the salary of the employees and remit the same to LIC. In August, 2003, complaints were received from the employees regarding premium not having been adjusted against their policies. On receiving the complaints, an enquiry was instituted by LIC. Enquiry revealed